



The story of Farm 217

Analysing a non-operational large-scale land acquisition in Tanzania as an open moment

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Abstract

In the wake of the 2007 finance crisis, large-scale land acquisitions became increasingly popular. Investing in land for food and biofuel production was seen as safe and with the potential of a 'win-win-win'-scenario where the investments would create economic growth, increase food production, and lift smallholders out of poverty. However, in Tanzania, one in three of such investments have not fulfilled what they promised by becoming non-operational. We still have a limited understanding of why such investments become non-operational and how smallholders are affected by them.

This thesis aims to contribute to the existing literature on non-operational large-scale land acquisitions by describing a non-operational investment in Mkulazi ward, Tanzania. Empirical data was collected in the investment area, using observations and interviews with smallholders, but also with representatives from both the Tanzanian government and the state-owned company that was responsible for the initial investment (Mkulazi Holding Company Limited). By using 'open moment' as an overarching theoretical concept, coupled with perspectives on societal structure, knowledge, and uncertainty, the findings indicate that smallholders have been affected greatly, but in different ways. Depending on what societal structure they belonged to and what knowledge they had about the land before the investment, they chose different strategies when the investors came, in part due to different levels of experienced uncertainty that the open moment caused. Also, the opportunities and risks the smallholders identified regarding their land-use was greatly influenced by the non-operational LSLA.

Keywords: land, agriculture, smallholder, pastoralist, large-scale, acquisition, investment, non-operational, failed, open moment, uncertainty, knowledge, societal structure, land-relations, risk, opportunity, development, Tanzania, Mkulazi

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Abbreviations

LSLA	Large-scale land acquisition
MHCL	Mkulazi Holding Company Limited
NSSF	National Social Security Fund
PCS	Prison Corporation Sole
SAGCOT	Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania
TIC	Tanzania Investment Centre
VEO	Village Executive Officer
WEO	Ward Executive Officer

1. Introduction

“We have put aside our dreams. They destroyed me psychologically.” (C2, February 2024)

A farmer in his thirties said this during an interview about a non-operational investment done by Mkulazi Holding Company Limited (MHCL) in Mkulazi ward, Tanzania. He expressed the problems trying to make a living out of land that he knows is not his and that at any time can be taken away from him, without being compensated. Even if he still uses the land the same way as before MHCL came, something has changed. This thesis sets out to understand how land-users in Mkulazi ward relate to land inside the non-operational investment, and how they have been affected by it. As C2’s quote indicates, the effects of a non-operational investment may not only manifest itself in material ways, but also mentally. Below, I will introduce the wider context on non-operational large-scale land acquisitions and present the existing literature on the subject.

1.1 Non-operational large-scale land acquisitions

Around 2010, there was ‘global land rush’ causing a surge in large-scale land acquisitions (LSLAs) (Wolford et al 2024; White et al 2012; Akram-Lodhi 2012; Engström 2020). However, not all LSLAs have been successful (Nolte 2020; Borrás et al 2022; Broegaard et al 2022; Chung & Gagné 2021; Cochrane et al 2024; GRAIN 2018; Chung 2017). Nolte (2020) has studied non-operational LSLAs by using data from the Land Matrix Initiative, a website dedicated to providing data on land acquisitions going as far back as year 2000 (Nolte et al 2016). In the study, Nolte (2020) identifies 1707 agricultural land acquisitions globally between year 2000 and February 2018. Of the 1707 cases, 225 have become non-operational for some reason, comprising 12% of all projects (ibid). There was also a clear peak in number of investments between 2005 and 2013 (ibid). However, Africa is especially prone to having non-operational investments, with 20% of them becoming non-operational. This can be compared to the second-most non-operational-prone continent, Asia, with a rate of 5% (ibid). Furthermore, in Tanzania, 35% of all projects become non-operational, according to Nolte’s

analysis of data from the Land Matrix. Thus, non-operational land acquisitions are a phenomenon that is prevalent across the globe and especially in Tanzania.

1.2 The existing body of literature

First, I would like to discuss my decision on phrasing. I have decided to use ‘non-operational’ to describe the LSLAs that have in one way or another not gone as planned. This has two reasons. First, the concept of ‘failure’ is subjective. An investor’s ‘failure’ could be a ‘success’ for a negatively affected smallholder. I think that ‘non-operational’ is less biased in that sense, but not perfect. Second, ‘non-operational’ better encapsulates all the ways in which a project can be not ‘successful’. It can for instance be only a paper product, stalled, or cancelled all together. Other scholars use “failed” (Nolte 2020; Cochrane et al 2023), “delayed” or “limbo” (Chung & Gagné 2021; Engström 2018), and “unimplemented” (Broegaard et al 2022). My use of ‘non-operational’ is meant to be interchangeable with the abovementioned phrasings since the same phenomenon is often described, albeit in different words.

While non-operational LSLAs have gotten more attention by researchers, it is still an under-investigated phenomenon (Borras et al 2022; Broegaard et al 2022; Wolford et al 2024). Borras et al (2022) takes on an ambitious task by making a systematic literature review on all scientific articles published between 2000 and 2020 in Web of Science that are directly concerned with large-scale land acquisitions. They found 1370 such articles, so LSLAs in general are somewhat well-documented. However, only 29 of the 1370 articles (2.1%) are “[...] related to some aspects of ‘Non-operational land deals’ [...]” (Borras et al 2022:1). By comparing this to Nolte’s (2020) findings where 12% of all land acquisitions fail, a clear research deficit emerges regarding non-operational LSLAs. The number of scientific articles should be around 164 to correspond with the percentage of non-operational land acquisitions. There is a gap in our knowledge regarding non-operational LSLAs and a need for further research.

1.3 Two overarching categories

Simplified, the existing literature on non-operational LSLAs can be divided in two broad categories which will be presented and exemplified below.

1.3.1 Category 1

Category 1: literature that try to explain or describe why LSLAs become non-operational and what lessons can be learned. Cochrane et al (2023) investigates why

106 foreign direct agricultural investments in Ethiopia have become non-operational and comes up with five main reasons for “failure” and what can be learned from them. The reasons are:

[...] insufficient planning at the proposal stage, assumptions about the availability of expertise, sociopolitical and environmental risks, insufficient financing and/or a changing investment landscape and underestimation and/or misunderstanding regarding the limits of extractive approaches. (Cochrane et al 2023:541)

One could say that one common denominator among these reasons stems from a lack of understanding of the local context. This conclusion is supported by Engström (2018) and also by Nolte (2020), another paper trying to understand why investments become non-operational. Nolte finds that cooperation from a large foreign investor with a smaller domestic investor leads to fewer land acquisitions becoming non-operational. Most likely due to a better local knowledge from the domestic investor and more acceptance in affected communities (ibid). Further, Nolte (2020) finds that investments fail at different stages depending on the context. In Madagascar for example, recent investments have failed early in the process, possibly due to a high scepticism or even hostility among local communities toward LSLAs because of the Daewoo investment (see Andrianirina Ratsialonana et al 2011) (ibid). This further proves that knowledge of the local and historical context is key to have an operational land investment and that lack thereof is an important cause for investments becoming non-operational. Another recent literature review by Bélair et al (2024) of all scientific LSLA-studies with first hand empirical data in seven Sub Saharan African countries, show that the two major reasons behind non-operational investments are local opposition and financial difficulties. In turn, local opposition is largely caused by flawed land acquisition processes and unfulfilled promises by the investors (ibid). Similarly, Borrás et al (2022), as presented above, provide a quantitative literature overview on LSLAs, which they also exemplify with two cases, one from Mozambique and one from Myanmar. These cases show how complex and seemingly haphazard the investment processes can be, causing great uncertainty for the local communities. One important conclusion from the Mozambiquan case is that even if a land acquisition is non-operational, the previous users were still excluded from the land (ibid). This brings me to the second category of LSLA-literature which will be presented below.

1.3.2 Category 2

Category 2: literature that is concerned with the effects of LSLAs on local communities. The article from Broegaard et al (2022) is a good example as it describes an abandoned biofuel project in northern Laos and how smallholders' access to, tenure, and use of land have been affected. The authors found that even if a project is non-operational or abandoned it has caused a shift in how the affected

land is viewed by government officials and land-use planners (ibid). The land should, according to them, in the future be ‘productive’ and subsistence farming is considered un-productive, so the abandoned land is instead intended for new investments (ibid). Chung (2017) investigates how the social reproduction, the continuation of social systems, among women in Bagamoyo, Tanzania, is affected by a non-operational LSLA. Chung found that displacement, and threat thereof, causes effects beyond loss of livelihoods because smallholders have knowledges, cultural practices, and memories that are “[...] rooted on the land and articulated through gender.” (Chung 2017:117). When people are uprooted by LSLAs their social world is disturbed, causing uncertainty and a need to renegotiate strategies for their livelihoods and household gender relations (ibid). Engström (2020) writes that non-operational investments cause uncertainty, which puts smallholders’ development plans on hold. Lastly, Chung and Gagné (2021) draw similar conclusions. Non-operational LSLAs can cause lack of access to land for pre-existing users, cause displacement, and increase local tensions, inequalities, and conflicts (ibid).

2. Aim and research questions

As researchers have shown, the effects are often negative for previous users, but they are very context-specific in what way and why they are negative. Even if scholars seem to draw somewhat uniform conclusions on what consequences non-operational LSLAs cause, there is still a limited understanding. This thesis aims to be one piece of the greater literature puzzle in two ways. First, by contributing data on the almost untold story of the investment on Farm 217. Second, by describing how the investment on Farm 217 has affected smallholders' land-use in the area. I will use 'open moments' as the overarching theoretical concept to analyse my empirical findings, which I will elaborate on in the theory section. I have formulated two research questions that will guide the orientation of this thesis:

- How does the open moment in Mkulazi ward, caused by a non-operational LSLA, affect land-use among smallholders?
- What risks and opportunities regarding land-use do smallholders identify within the open moment in Mkulazi ward, caused by the non-operational LSLA?

3. Background

Below, I will present the context in which Mkulazi Holding Company Limited's (MHCL) investment on Farm 217 in Mkulazi ward happened.

3.1 Global rush for land

As discussed briefly in the introduction, during the first decade of the current millennium there have been what many scholars call a 'global rush for land' (Wolford et al 2024; White et al 2012; Akram-Lodhi 2012; Engström 2018; Zoomers 2010). By reviewing the existing literature, I have found four causes for this land rush that are relevant for the case that will be presented in this thesis. They are of course interconnected and might even in some cases be causal. It should be noted that the rationales behind the global land rush are much debated, below I will outline those that are the most relevant for this thesis.

First, the rush for land was accelerated by the global finance crisis that started in 2007, where several markets, such as housing and insurance, crashed, causing investments in agricultural land for food and biofuel production to be seen as safe and with high potential (Wolford et al 2024). Second, in 2007 food prices started to skyrocket across the globe, which made agricultural production even more beneficial for investors since it was a lucrative market, and for governments since food imports became very expensive (Akram-Lodhi 2012). Third, interest in biofuels production also grew around the same years due to a fear of 'peak oil', causing stakeholders to invest in alternative energy sources (White et al 2012). Also, many Western countries feared becoming too dependent on Middle Eastern countries to provide them with oil and gas, which further grew the interest in biofuels production (ibid).

Fourth and lastly, a narrative within the development and multilateral spheres came to focus on the 'unused' potential of agricultural land, mainly in developing countries (White et al 2012, Akram-Lodhi 2012). A report from the World Bank named *Rising Global Interest in Farmland – Can it Yield Sustainable and Equitable Benefits?* (Deininger & Byerlee 2011) have been especially influential. The authors of the report meant that there were 446 million hectares of land that were

noncultivated, nonforested, nonprotected, and populated with less than 25 individuals per square kilometre (ibid:XXXIV). This enormous amount of land, framed as ‘underutilized’, would at the time have amounted to almost a third of cropped land in the entire world (1.5 billion hectares) (ibid). Further, the report tried to identify land that either had a high yield gap or high potential for expansion, or ideally both characteristics. The world’s countries/regions were then divided into four distinct categories: Type 1: Little land for expansion and low yield gap. Includes parts of Asia, Western Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. Type 2: Land available for expansion and low yield gap. Includes countries in mainly Latin America. Type 3: Little land available and high yield gap. Includes small and densely populated developing countries such as Rwanda, Burundi, and Malawi. Type 4: Land available for expansion and high yield gap. Includes countries such as Mozambique, Sudan, Zambia, and Tanzania (ibid). White et al (2012) mean that the way land is framed in the World Bank report, for instance as “noncultivated” or not producing enough yields, is flawed. The potential of the land identified in the report is inflated since it does not account for lack of infrastructure and insufficient access to input and output markets (ibid). Also, the notion of unused or underused land negates the fact that much land is used by pastoralists or used for various livelihood activities other than agriculture, such as collection of fruits, nuts, medicinal plants, firewood, and timber (ibid).

3.2 SAGCOT

A sign of the narrative on large-scale agricultural land investments within the development and multilateral sphere around 2010 is the establishment of agricultural growth corridors (Sulle 2020). This is especially true for Tanzania where the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania (SAGCOT) was established in 2010 (ibid). It is formally owned by the Tanzanian state but is highly influenced by private companies through public-private partnership initiatives (Byiers et al 2016). Also, Sulle (2020) notes that the plans for the corridor were made by private consulting companies. SAGCOT was first promoted by a Norwegian fertiliser company at the United Nations General Assembly in 2008, then again at the World Economic Forum in 2009 before becoming a reality in 2010 (ibid). The objective of SAGCOT is “[...] to boost agricultural productivity, improve food security, reduce poverty, and ensure environmental sustainability through commercialization of smallholder agriculture.” (SAGCOT 2024). This is to be done by investing in large-scale agriculture and outgrower schemes for smallholders, coupled with investments in infrastructure (Sulle 2020). The idea of SAGCOT is to create hubs and nodes for infrastructure, technology, investments, and large-scale agricultural production (Byiers et al 2016).

Pauline et al (2023) review the outcomes of SAGCOT. They found that the initial goal of establishing large-scale agricultural enterprises have not been met. Instead, the investments that have persevered in the SAGCOT area are mainly small- and medium-scale (ibid). Thus, the authors argue that there is a gap in policy and reality, which should be addressed. Pauline et al also found that the small- and medium-scale enterprises are good at delivering the objectives SAGCOT has set out, in part due to their history and local knowledge of the area.

3.3 Mkulazi Holding Company Limited and Farm 217

Despite the benevolent ambitions of SAGCOT, it is not uniformly a success for everyone affected by the various projects (Sulle 2020), much in line with the gap between practice and policy identified by Pauline et al (2023), which have caused mixed outcomes in the area. Sulle (2020) describes three different cases within the SAGCOT area, one of which is the story of Mkulazi Holding Company Limited (MHCL) – the case in focus of this thesis. The company was founded by Prime Minister Kassim Majaliwa in September 2017 and is run by the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) together with the Prison Corporation Sole (PCS), both state-owned (Mkulazi Holding Company Limited 2024). The company was set to grow sugarcane on state-owned land in Mkulazi ward, and then refine it into sugar at a planned factory in the area (Sulle 2020). The state-owned land south of Ngerengere is called Farm 217 and is an area that is made up of 63 000 hectares of continuous land. The initial plan of the MHCL was, according to Sulle (2020), to manage its own sugarcane production on 38 000 hectares, have outgrower production of sugarcane on 3000 hectares, and grow other cash crops such as sorghum, rice, and sunflower on the remaining 22 000 hectares. The plan was also to use the adjacent Ruvu and Ngerengere rivers for irrigation (ibid).

According to Sulle (2020), at the time of writing his article (December 2018) no work, other than clearing boundaries and roads, had been initiated at Farm 217. At the same time, in 2018, MHCL started to establish a sugar processing factory and preparing farmland for sugarcane cultivation in another district, Mvomero district (ibid), circa 110 kilometres from Mkulazi ward, as the crow flies. In late 2023 the factory in Mvomero seems to be operational (Daily News 2023). Meanwhile, no scientific work or news articles have, to my knowledge, been published about the investment in Farm 217 since Sulle's. Then, on December 11th, 2023, a 'call for investment' for Farm 217 was published on Tanzania Investment Centre's (TIC) website (TIC 2023)(Appendix 1), indicating that MHCL's plans for Farm 217 have been abandoned. The TIC is a state-owned organisation with a mission to "[...] coordinate, promote, and facilitate investments in Tanzania [...]" (TIC 2024). The call for investment shows how the 63 000 hectares are to be divided into six separate

farms comprising circa 10 000 hectares each and the TIC are searching for both domestic and foreign investors that are willing to conduct “[...] large-scale commercial farming for cultivation of crops and modern livestock keeping [...]” (TIC 2023). It is also mentioned in the call for investment that Farm 217 is owned by the TIC and potential investors will lease the land from them (ibid). In other words, it is clear that the initial plans for Farm 217 from MHCL have been cancelled, leaving Farm 217 non-operational, but still intended for investment.

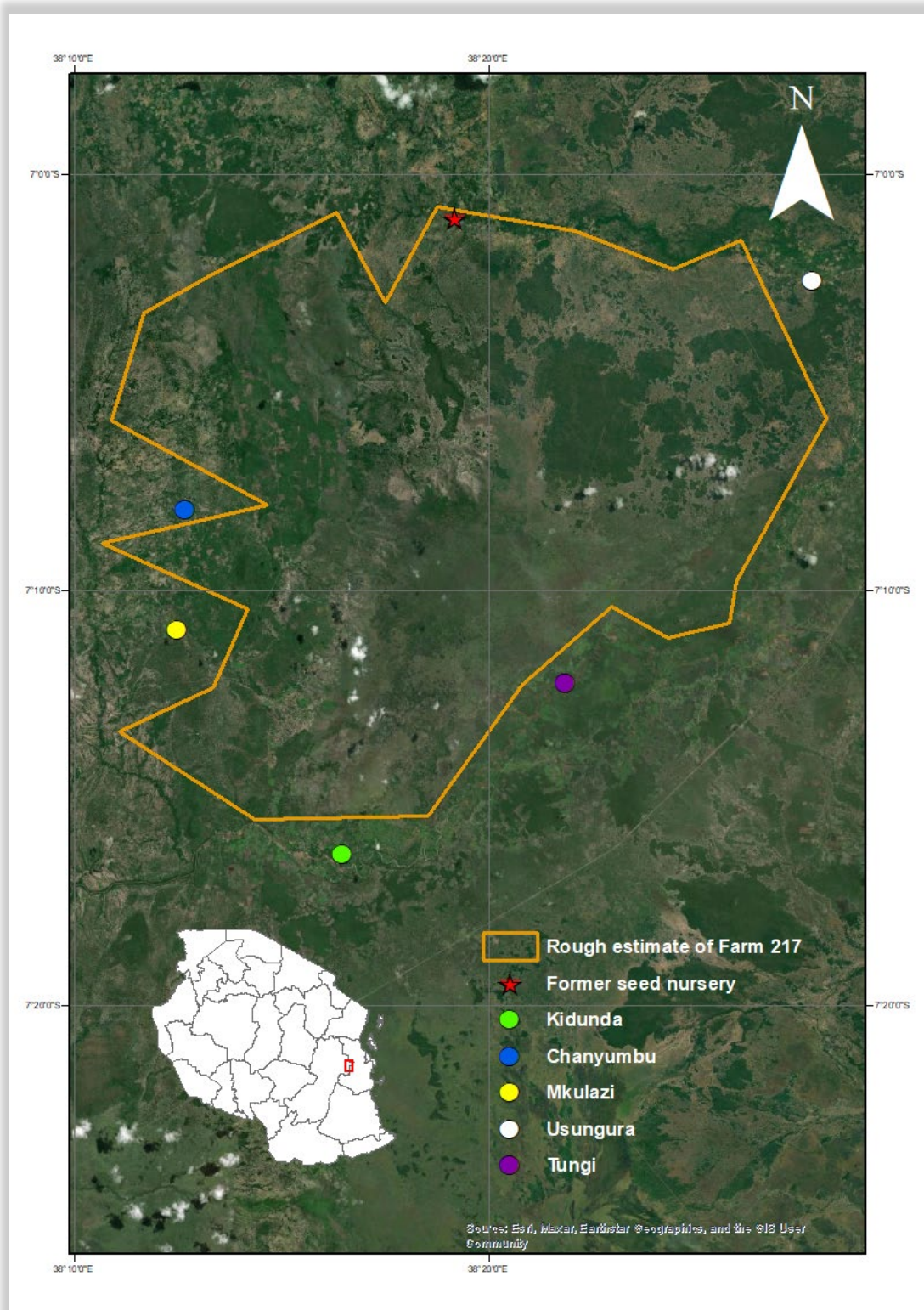


Figure 1. Map of Farm 217 and the four villages (Kidunda, Chanyumbu, Mkulazi, Usungura) as well as the subvillage Tungi, created by author. The border of the investment area is very rough and not exact. It is drawn by hand in ArcMap based on a map from a SAGCOT-presentation, using collected coordinates during the field study as reference points. The investment borders the Ruvu river in the south-east and the Ngerengere river in the north.

3.4 Tanzanian land governance and administration

In Tanzania, all land is owned by the state (Bluwstein et al 2018). The land is then divided into three types: village land, general land, and reserve land (Sundet 2005). Village land is governed in each village by a democratically chosen council so that local users can obtain and secure tenure rights to their land (Bluwstein et al 2018). However, the farmers are not formally owning the land from a legal point of view. Also, the president of Tanzania can “[...] acquire any land for any estate or term where such land is required for any public purpose.” (Land Acquisition Act 1967). “Public purpose” has a broad definition in the text, but most noteworthy in the context of this thesis, is that use for ‘agricultural development’ is seen as public purpose (ibid). General land is all land that is not village or reserve land (Bluwstein et al 2018). This includes urban areas and investments, but also village land that is deemed “unoccupied or unused” (ibid). Reserve land is perhaps the most easily understood category of land. It includes land that is set aside for conservation and tourism, such as forest reserves and national parks (Bluwstein et al 2018).

Bluwstein et al (2018) mean that the laws governing land in Tanzania causes already marginalised groups, such as migrants, pastoralists, and women, to be extra vulnerable, with little to no recognition of land rights. Even a relatively powerful male smallholder can at any point in time have his legally recognised right to access his land taken away if the Tanzanian president considers the land to be of “public purpose” or “unused”.

Tanzania is divided into 31 regions, which in turn are divided into 184 districts. The districts are comprised of divisions that are then divided into wards. Each ward usually includes several villages, which in turn are divided into subvillages. For the context of this thesis, the workings of the ward and village levels are the most relevant levels of administration. For both these levels there are democratically elected councils and state-appointed executive officers (Ward Executive Officer, Village Executive Officers). A Chairperson for each village and subvillage is also elected. Further, village land is governed by the village council and the village assembly (Kinunda 2022). However, as noted above, the President owns all land.

4. Theoretical framework

My aim from the beginning was to understand if and how land-use in the area, both within Farm 217 and the adjacent village land, had been affected by the investment, understanding why land-users acted the way they did when the investors came, and what the land-users wanted for the future. After a few weeks of collecting data, it was evident that actors had acted differently when and after the investment happened. Also, there were somewhat contrasting desires for how the land-users wanted to use Farm 217 and the village land in the future. Why was that? I was not able to decipher this during the field study but started to see patterns when going through my material back home in Sweden. It seemed like the way land-users acted and what desires they had for the future depended on for example what village they lived in, what information they had about the land before the investment happened, their relation to the land, and their assets. With these preliminary conclusions in mind, I found Lund's (2016) use of 'open moments', which resonated with my results and will be used as theoretical concept in this thesis.

4.1 Open moments

According to Lund (2016), an open moment is created by a 'rupture' where the pre-existing societal structures are questioned or broken down, creating a new societal order. I will delve further into what I understand as 'societal structure' in the section below. In his paper, Lund exemplifies the start of colonial rule in Ghana as the 'rupture' where an open moment was created by the British rulers and experienced by the Ghanaian population. As Lund points out, colonialism is one of the most severe forms of rupture that can happen and there are other ways an open moment can be created. Further, during an open moment risks and opportunities for involved actors become heightened and Lund means that open moments are a favourable time to conduct research since the visibility of societal structures become amplified, thus making them easier to observe. Building on Lund's use of open moments and rupture, Stiernström (2024) uses a somewhat reduced version of Lund's definition as he mainly departs from the notion of 'rupture'. Instead, Stiernström describes a 'soft opening' of the open moment by building on his work on mine prospecting in northern Sweden. Stiernström's use of a 'soft opening' of an open moment, rather than Lund's 'rupture' "[...] lies in the *potentiality* for rapid change of established

structures.” (Stiernström 2024:36). I believe this perception and use of open moments better relate to cases of non-operational LSLAs since the societal structures are not necessarily completely changed but rather become uncertain and less reliable, compared to the ‘rupture’ that is created by colonialism, as exemplified by Lund. However, the start of the open moment, when the investors came, could be viewed as a rupture but since the investment is now non-operational, I believe that Stiernström’s definition is more useful for the case that is the focus of this thesis. Especially relevant is Stiernström’s notion of an “extended moment of uncertainty” (2024:35), which resonated well with my findings from the field study. This corresponds with the ‘soft opening’ rather than the ‘rupture’ of an open moment, as the affected smallholders know something could potentially happen with their land, but not when and how. Below, I will introduce three concepts that are often looked at in the context of an open moment (Stiernström 2024).

4.1.1 Social land-relations – a key element of societal structures

Societal structure was mentioned previously, which of course can incorporate a plethora of different elements such as gender, formal hierarchies, informal hierarchies, material assets, politics, economics, and many other. However, this thesis will focus on one aspect of societal structure, namely social land-relations among smallholder farmers and pastoralists. Thus, when societal structure is mentioned, it mainly considers aspects of how such land-users relate socially to land, which includes dynamics such as how they use the land, their knowledge about the land, historical ties, spiritual ties, and how they gain access to it. Going beyond the binary and western-centric term of property, which is not applicable in the context of this thesis, I will build the analysis based on Ribot and Peluso’s (2003) ‘theory of access’, which describes how land-users are able to benefit from land and other natural resources even if they do not necessarily own it. The authors mean that access is gained through “a bundle of powers” (Ribot & Peluso 2003:153). The powers that enable a user to benefit from a resource can be for example access to knowledge, authority, social relations, and capital (ibid). The perspective from Ribot and Peluso (2003) on land and access is the foundation for my understanding of social land-relations and how I will use it to analyse the open moment created by the investment. This is done by looking at how land-users gain access to their land, what type of social relation they have to it, and how they view the investment land now. In the context of an open moment created by a non-operational LSLA, the insights provided by Ribot and Peluso allows me to understand how and why the users’ social land-relations, which are an element of the societal structure, have changed within the open moment.

4.1.2 Uncertainty and knowledge

Uncertainty is often a consequence of an open moment (Stiernström 2024). The term will be used in this thesis to analyse how uncertainty caused by the non-operational LSLA interacts with the smallholders' land-use strategies and what risks and opportunities they see for the future within the open moment. My understanding and use of uncertainty is similar to that of Shani's (2017) use of ontological security. Shani critiques the understanding of 'human security', making the argument that it is too focused on physical security, relying on a strong nation-state. Instead, Shani argues that ontological security, where focus is put on strengthening social bonds through elements such as language, culture, and religion, should be the goal for actors trying to create security. I would argue that a stable and uncontested relationship between land-users and their land is a significant part of creating ontological security. In cases of non-operational LSLAs, this relationship can be altered, which in turn can create ontological insecurity or uncertainty.

Interlinked with uncertainty is knowledge (Scoones 2019). For the context of this thesis, I will mainly focus on knowledge about Farm 217. Different knowledges make people act in diverse ways when exposed to uncertainty (Scoones 2019). In this thesis, I will try to understand if and how knowledge play a part in how land-users navigate within the uncertainty caused by the open moment. Further, Scoones argues that how an individual is embedded in the societal structure through for example gender, race, class, and location can affect how uncertainty is experienced by them. This notion is important for my analysis as it connects uncertainty with societal structure. The connection between uncertainty, knowledge, and societal structure also shows how they all affect each other and that it is beneficial to use them simultaneously.

4.2 Summing up

To sum up, open moments will be used as the overarching theoretical concept to describe the non-operational LSLA in Mkulazi ward. As described by Stiernström (2024) and Lund (2016), within an open moment the societal structures, in this thesis symbolised by social land-relations, become uncertain, and risks and opportunities are amplified. Scoones (2019) shows how knowledge and uncertainty are interconnected with the social land-relations. I envision open moments as containing dynamics of uncertainty, knowledge, and social land-relations allows me to look at the non-operational LSLA in Mkulazi ward from the land-users' perspectives. Both why they chose certain land-use strategies but also how they assess risks and opportunities in their future land-use.

5. Methodology

This thesis sets out to understand how land-users in Mkulazi ward have been affected by the non-operational LSLA initiated by the Tanzanian government. As discussed in the background section, at the time of writing (May 2024) there is barely any published information about this particular case in academia, nor in media or elsewhere. Some ‘hard’ facts regarding the rough time of when the investment happened, how much land was acquired, and that it had ended were known from initial information that was provided by my supervisor Dr. Linda Engström and her colleagues. But overall, much more information needed to be gathered, especially regarding the locals’ perspectives on it. Therefore, I chose a qualitative research design since it is a good way of understanding how groups and individuals relate to the world (Creswell & Creswell 2018). This thesis positions itself in the intersection between agricultural and social sciences by trying to understand how social relations to land affects land-use, and vice versa. To understand the land-users’ perspectives, it was clear from the beginning that a field study needed to be conducted in the communities that had been affected by the investment.

5.1 Ethnographic research

Cresswell and Cresswell (2018) mean that collecting data within the context that is studied is one of the cornerstones of qualitative research. In theory, interviews with the land-users could have been conducted via mobile phones, but the data would most likely have lacked depth, which a field study added to my findings. Also, the context needed to be understood, which is why I chose an ethnographic research method to meet these needs. Ethnographic research comes from the field of anthropology and includes observing and interviewing individuals in their everyday lives (Creswell & Creswell 2018). This includes in-depth interviewing and participant observation (ibid). The goal is to understand how “[...] people describe and structure their world.” (ibid:280). My study would have benefitted from me being able to stay longer and over different periods of time in Mkulazi ward, as is often done and favoured in ethnographic work (Robson & McCartan 2016). Robson and McCartan write that an emerging approach in ethnographic work is that of

‘mini-ethnographies’, which tries to reduce the time spent in the field. This thesis should be viewed as part of this developing tradition. The obvious downside to this approach is that my understanding of the social context become limited (see Robson & McCartan 2016). I was during the field study aware of this problem and tried to immerse myself into the context as much as possible by for example living in the area for almost a month, spending time with farmers on their fields, wearing a Young Africans FC¹ -jersey to make myself relatable, and many other strategies.

The field study was conducted with a fellow student and friend, Niklas Koserius. He is set to write his own master thesis about the investment in Farm 217 but from a different angle, mainly about resistance. Together we employed two interpreters, Kona Charles Kona and Nestura Shanice Kimaro to help us conduct interviews and understand the social context.

5.1.1 Interviews

The main method of data collection were individual interviews. To be allowed to even conduct interviews in Tanzania I first needed to obtain a research permit from Tanzania’s Commission for Science and Technology, This was then shown to the director of the regional office (Morogoro region) who provided me with a recommendation letter that was shown to the director of the district office (Morogoro Rural), who in turn gave me a second recommendation letter that was shown to the Ward Executive Office (WEO) of Mkulazi ward, who gave his permission for me to start interviewing. However, Charles and Nestura informed me and Niklas that we should, in each village, start interviewing the Chair and Village Executive Officer (VEO), and get their permission to carry on. Therefore, this became a natural starting point to get in contact with informants. We asked the Chairs and VEOs of the four villages to set us in contact with farmers that had been affected by the investment and then we booked interviews with them. In Mkulazi and Chanyumbu, we also held initial group interviews, one in each village, to get a lay of the land. This way of getting in contact with informants is of course biased since the village leaders chose for us. We tried to overcome this by making sure to also interview the wives of those that attended the group interviews and to interview pastoralists that were rarely recommended to us by the leaders. We also interviewed the farmers partaking in the group interviews individually. The information I collected from the group interviews will not be presented in this thesis, mainly because the same information was collected during the individual interviews, and I found it hard to sort out who said what, even when listening to them afterwards. Therefore, I have chosen to exclude these results.

¹ One of the most popular domestic football teams in Tanzania.

The 43 individual interviews with land-users were semi-structured, while the interviews with representatives from Morogoro Region and MHCL were slightly more open-ended. I had a few fixed questions for the interviews with land-users, such as ‘What did you cultivate on the investment land before the investors came?’, ‘How many acres do you use?’, ‘Have you been affected by the investment? How?’. I planned the interviews so that I had time to ask follow-up questions and elaborate on the topics I found especially interesting. About two thirds of the interviews were conducted together with Niklas, who had a different focus for his questions and thesis. This gave me the opportunity to reflect during the interviews and formulate follow-up questions that I otherwise would not have asked. Also, I gained a deeper understanding of the context since I was able to listen to somewhat different questions and answers that I would not have asked and gotten, if not for Niklas.

5.1.2 Observations

An important part of ethnographic field work is making and documenting observations (Creswell & Creswell 2018). This was done continuously during and between the interviews to gain further insights, and when possible, to triangulate information provided during the interviews. I always kept a notebook on hand to jot down thoughts that came up when walking through the villages. Also, I kept a journal to capture my reflections and emotions during the field study. Along with writing field notes and journaling, I made sure to take pictures to document what I observed, which proved helpful for my memory. Further, I collected coordinates throughout the field study to be able to make the map presented in chapter 3.3 of this thesis.

5.2 Handling of data

Almost daily during the field study, I made sure to transcribe my notes from the interviews and save them digitally in a document on my computer. This was a useful way of reflecting upon the interviews a few hours after conducting them and sorting the information. Back home in Sweden, during the time of the analysis, my field notes were easy to access in the digital document and I was able to search for keywords that made it easy to code and look for quotes. I coded the interviews into two different themes, which both had four subthemes. These themes will be presented in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

5.3 Reflexivity

This brings me to the importance of reflexivity within research. Reflexivity means that I reflect on my role as a student researcher before, during, and after the field study, based on dynamics such as gender, background, history, biases, and culture (Creswell & Creswell 2018). To think of myself as completely neutral, especially when interacting with the land-users, is according to me naïve. Who I am, for example a white Swedish man influences how I interpret the world and how others interpret me. This influences my data. Both what is provided and how I view it. I conducted research simultaneously as my friend and classmate Niklas, and together we had two interpreters with us, Kona Charles Kona and Nestura Shanice Kimaro. The interpreters were invaluable, not only through language translation, but also in their knowledge about the Tanzanian society and their ability to interpret the local culture for us. For instance, shortly after we arrived to Mkulazi ward, our interpreters noticed that rumours started to spread among the locals that me and Niklas were investors. This was not in itself surprising, two white Europeans suddenly appearing in rural Tanzania asking about the previous investment and land-use is destined to start rumours. However, Charles and Nestura made sure to address these rumours early on by speaking to farmers, local leaders, and notifying us, which made us able to take the appropriate measures. We were wary of providing enough time during each interview to explain who we were, why we were asking questions, that participation was voluntary, that they would be anonymous, and ask if they had questions to us after the interviews.

6. Setting the stage: MHCL and Farm 217, continued



Figure 2. MHCL sign by the road to Usungura. Photo by author.

Here, I will present additional background information about MHCL and Farm 217 that was collected during the field study. As stated previously, not much had been written about the investment in Farm 217, neither scientifically nor journalistically. Therefore, much time had to be spent during the interviews trying to understand what had happened. Often, there were conflicting information, especially regarding what information the land-users had about Farm 217 prior to when the investors came.

In the appendix, I present tables showing the number of interviews divided by village, gender, and age (Appendix 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). Age is not exact but rounded up or down to the nearest five or ten to maintain anonymity. Also, the informants are assigned a code in the tables to make it easier to reference them in the text. Summarized, 18 interviews were conducted in Mkulazi village (8 women, 10 men), 12 in Chanyumbu (3 women, 9 men), six in Kidunda (Tungi) (2 women, 4 men), two in Usungura (2 men), and five interviews with pastoralists (1 woman, 4 men). In total, 43 interviews with farmers and agro-pastoralists were conducted. The following text will also build on interviews with Chairs, VEOs, the Mkulazi Ward Councillor and WEO, interviews with the assistant regional administrative secretary for trade, industry, and investments and the assistant regional administrative secretary responsible for the economic and production section from the Morogoro Regional office, and lastly, the Senior Legal Counsel and the Manager for project planning and performance management at MHCL.

6.1 When did the investors arrive and what was said?

Everyone we spoke to said that the investors came in 2017. First, they cleared the boundaries of Farm 217 early in 2017 by removing the vegetation to create a circa two-meter-wide path going around the entire investment area. At first, I thought it was only a trail where pastoralists for instance could herd their livestock, but it was later pointed out to me what it was. While not being physically restricting to the local land-users, the boundaries are clearly visible. Later in 2017, representatives from the NSSF and PCS seemed to have held meetings with village farmers where they were informed of what was going to happen. Some informants said they were told to stop cultivating the land and leave, some said they were told to stay on their farms but not to plant any permanent crops. The Mkulazi Ward Councillor stated that the representatives from NSSF and PCS had said that farmers should form outgrower groups to be able to sell crops such as sugar cane, sorghum, sunflower, and rice to the investors. This claim was supported by several farmers. M5 for instance said that shortly after the investors came, he formed an outgrower group together with circa 40 other farmers and they grew sesame for one season, sold it, and then opened a bank account where they put their earnings. They were required to have active bank accounts according to M5 and another farmer, P4, to be able to sell crops to the investors and still use land in Farm 217. This understanding was also shared by the VEO and the Chair of Kidunda who said that the investors had wanted to involve the local population through employment opportunities and outgrower schemes. Representatives from MHCL later confirmed that outgrower schemes on the investment land were a part of their plans for Farm 217.

However, not everyone stated that they were invited to or had attended meetings. Only one pastoralist (P4) had been invited to such a meeting and he was the only one that stated he was registered in the village, which might have been the reason he was invited or allowed to attend. The pastoralists that we spoke to were sanctioned by the village leaders to use land in the investment through informal payments before the investors arrived. P1 had for instance paid 500 000 Tanzanian shilling² to the local government when he arrived and still made yearly contributions. The Chair of Usungura was a pastoralist and when he arrived in the area, he had to pay for new classroom in the village to be allowed to use the land. He was also told that the land he used in Farm 217 was part of the village land. However, he had to move in 2017 when the investors came, which made him feel betrayed and somewhat bitter: “I wasted my energy by using the investment land”.

In general, it proved difficult to understand what had been said regarding the investment plans, when, by who, and in what context. C11 from Chanyumbu said that it was not the investors that told him to move from Farm 217, but the local leaders. On the other hand, K1, subvillage Chair of Tungi, had been invited by MHCL, along with other village leaders in Mkulazi ward, to a seminar in Morogoro city in 2019. There, they were reportedly informed that there was no money left in the investment project and the leaders should tell the farmers to keep using the land. K1 said he had done so and had even expanded his own farm in the investment area. Similarly, the Chair of Usungura said that village leaders had been invited to a meeting in Dar es-Salaam early 2017 where the investors informed them about their plans and the leaders should then in their turn have informed the ward population, this however seems to have been done to a varying degree.

6.2 What did the investors do and when did they leave?

In Chanyumbu and Kidunda, the presence of the investors seems to have been minimal besides the clearing of borders and conducting meetings. In Mkulazi, several farmers said that the MHCL had asked the village leaders to give them village land along the main road where they could build some sort of building. Around 1 acre of forest had reportedly been cleared by locals and set aside but was never used by the investors in the end. Some farmers pointed out the exact location where land was cleared. When asked about this during the interview, representatives from MHCL firmly denied this being the case. In Usungura, the presence of MHCL seems to have been greater. When making a turn from the main

² In June 2015, the exchange rate for 500 000 TSh was 250 USD. 1 TSh equalled 0,0005 USD. In May 2024, 1 TSh equalled 0,00039 USD.

road towards the path to Usungura, there was still a sign indicating the location of MHCL (Picture 1). According to the VEO in Usungura, MHCL cleared some land close to the village where they were planning to have a sugar cane seed nursery. U1 said the company cleared around 300 acres, which seemed reasonable when observing the plot of land. Further, the VEO said that MHCL were active on that land between 2019 and 2020. By 2021 they had disappeared. MHCL stated that they indeed had built a seed nursery, but then left without speaking to anyone because they did not feel like they had made any impact in the area. This is because, according to them: “The only ones using that land were encroachers”, thus, according to MHCL, no one had been affected by their actions. At least no one that they would be obliged to take care of or speak to. The representatives from Morogoro regional office we spoke to said that MHCL had not informed them either about leaving Farm 217, something they should have done.

6.3 The government’s point of view

While disagreeing with the investor’s sudden exit, it seemed like the region officials had viewed the situation with Farm 217 like the MHCL. According to the region, there were “no encroachment on that land” and no one should be using it. When asked about the fact that there were many agro-pastoralists that had been living in Farm 217 for 12+ years, they said they would not be eligible to any form of compensation. That was because the pastoralists did not have what the regional office officials considered to be ‘permanent houses’, i.e. houses made of brick or stone. The pastoralists’ houses that could be observed were mainly built with wood, clay, and a tin roof. Very similar to the houses that could be found in the villages. Both the region officials and the MHCL representatives were firmly pushing the narrative that Farm 217 was not part of any village land and that anyone using the land were “encroachers”, a term used during both interviews. It seems like the region and MHCL are technically correct about the fact that Farm 217 have not been part of any village land, at least not for a long time. I base this claim on the information provided in the interviews about the boundary markings that was put in the ground in the 1970s or 1980s and that no one said they knew for sure that it had been village land. But what did the local land-users know about the legal definition of the land?

6.4 Prior knowledge

Neither of the pastoralists stated that they had any knowledge about Farm 217 being intended for investments before 2017. In Mkulazi village, most interviewees did not know that the land was investment-bound. M13 did however know that some

land in the area were owned by the government before 2017, due to noticing beacons in the ground that were indicating land boundaries. He did however not know which side of the beacons that was the governments. The Chair in Mkulazi said that Farm 217 had been owned by the government since 1952. She had herself farmed in the area until the investors came. The Mkulazi VEO stated that he had not known it was government land.

In Chanyumbu, everyone stated that they had not known anything about Farm 217 being intended for investment before 2017. This sentiment was not contested during interviews with the VEO or Chair of Chanyumbu either. In Usungura, one of the two farmers we spoke to was an 80 year old man (U2), who had known Farm 217 was owned by the government since at least 1988. The investors that came in 2017 had been the third round of investors since then. However, neither of them had created a successful investment. The other informant in Usungura (U1), an agro-pastoralist that came in 2010, had not known it was investment land. The Chair of Usungura said that his predecessor had helped the government put beacons in the ground in the 1970s or 1980s, this could be the same type of beacons that M13 had been referencing. In Mkulazi, we asked several locals if they knew where the beacons were and went to look in one place where M5 had noticed one of them before, but we were not able to find it. M5 thought that perhaps they had been removed at the same time as the boundaries had been cleared since they were so old and now it would be easier for investors to use a GPS.

In Tungi (Kidunda), all of the six respondents knew before 2017 that Farm 217 was intended for investment. K2 said that beacons had been placed in the ground around 40 years ago, corresponding well with the information provided in Usungura. According to K3, his parents had shown him pipes that indicated the boundaries for Farm 217 and had told him it was government-owned. Similarly, K4's grandparents had shown him the ground beacons and said that he had not been surprised when the investors showed up in 2017. K5 had only heard rumours that Farm 217 was owned by the government, while K6's grandparents had told her.

6.5 Reasons for the investment becoming non-operational

Lastly, representatives from MHCL said the reason the investment became non-operational was due to the complexity of establishing a sugar industry in such a huge area as Farm 217. Mainly due to problems with infrastructure and connectivity. The Region officials on the other hand said that the main issue was irrigation, and that any new investors must invest heavily in it for the operation to be successful and profitable. As stated previously in the background section, the

TIC is currently (spring 2024) looking for new investors for Farm 217. The region officials said that 5-10 investors had been interested since MHCL left and they are making recurrent visits to the area with potential investors who want to inspect the land.

6.6 Summing up

To sum up, there was not a uniform ground of knowledge in Mkulazi ward regarding the status of the land in Farm 217 and who has the rights to it. The ideas about the historic status of Farm 217 largely seemed to be based on local and inherited knowledge about the situation. This was especially true for the subvillage of Tungi where everyone seemed to have this knowledge, which can be compared to Chanyumbu where no one that we spoke to had this information prior to 2017.

7. Results

In this section of the thesis, I will present the findings from the field study. The data collection was conducted all of February 2024. We stayed at a local guest house in a Mkulazi village. In Mkulazi ward there are four main villages, Mkulazi, Kidunda, Chanyumbu, and Usungura. They are all close to different areas of Farm 217, and some subvillages (of the main villages) are even located inside the investment land. The aim was to interview farmers from each of the villages, which was achieved. However, more interviews were conducted in Mkulazi village, where we lived and in Chanyumbu, which was only a 15-minute *boda boda*³ ride from Mkulazi. Kidunda was circa one hour away with *boda boda* with good roads. However, Kidunda was the village farthest from Farm 217, so most residents in the main village had not been affected by the investment, according to the Village Executive Officer (VEO). Instead, farmers from Tungi, a subvillage of Kidunda, were interviewed since they lived right on the edge of the investment land. It did however take three hours to get to Tungi from Mkulazi, so it was not possible to spend more than one day there. Usungura was the village most inaccessible from Mkulazi, with a travel time of circa two and a half hours. Most of the road was a path through the forest and if it rained there was so much mud that the road became unpassable with *boda boda*. With the heavy rains looming in the end of February it was decided to only spend one day conducting interviews in Usungura.

One group that was not presented to us directly were pastoralists. It was not until the second week while conducting interviews in Chanyumbu that their presence was referenced. We found that almost all the pastoralists in Mkulazi ward lived inside Farm 217 and had done so for around 15 years or more. Realising that this group had not been heard yet and that they would most likely have been affected by the investment plans we asked around to get in contact with them. Eventually, we were able to interview five pastoralists from different households.

The result will be presented below by dividing it in two themes, corresponding to my research questions.

³ Motorcycle taxis are called *boda boda* in Kiswahili.

7.1 Theme 1: Changes in land-use

Here, I will present the empirical findings that will enable an understanding of the first research question regarding how an open moment affects land-use. The first theme that will be presented is how Farm 217 was used before the investors came in 2017 and how it has changed until now (2024). All 43 interviewees either used, still use, or started using Farm 217 between 2017-2024.

The Chair of Mkulazi (M1) was in her 60s and said that Farm 217 has always been used by villagers. This was supported by another elder in Mkulazi village, M3, who said he had used that land all his life, and so had his parents. He even had relatives that were buried on that land. In Chanyumbu, several interviewees said that the elders in the village had always used Farm 217. Similarly, K4 in Tungi said that even his grandparents had cultivated the land. Several respondents in their 30s across all four villages also mentioned how land in Farm 217 had been inherited from parents, or more commonly grandparents when they were too old or frail to farm on their own.

While Farm 217 was and is used by many smallholders it was notable that in Mkulazi and Chanyumbu no one lived close to their farms. In Mkulazi, most had to walk around 40 minutes to get to their farms and in Chanyumbu it took more than one hour. One morning me and my interpreter walked together with C8, a farmer from Chanyumbu to his farm within the investment land. The walk took one and a half hours in 30+ degrees heat through the thick forest on a small dirt path. Halfway there we met two other farmers who were carrying one bag of maize each down to the village. According to C8 they had been at their farm for two weeks non-stop to harvest without going back to their houses in the village. C8 and his wife had a similar strategy where one of them stayed at the farm in Farm 217 in a hut made of reed and wood for six days every week while the other stayed in their village house to take care of the children. Despite this somewhat tiresome arrangement no one in Chanyumbu or Mkulazi had built a permanent dwelling on their farmland.

However, all pastoralists that were interviewed and that could be observed lived inside Farm 217. Most pastoralists were from either the ethnic group Barabaig or more commonly Sukuma. The native village farmers in the area were mainly Kutu. According to the Barabaig pastoralist that was interviewed (P4), most Barabaig people made their living from livestock husbandry in Farm 217 and herded their animals to different areas depending on availability of feed and water, while having permanent settlements in the area. All four Sukuma people we spoke to said they and other Sukuma were agro-pastoralists, meaning they kept both livestock and farmed the land. Thus, they had larger and more permanent settlements in Farm 217 compared to the Barabaig.

Compared to the village farmers, the pastoralists had rather large plots of land. P3's family cultivated rice, maize, sorghum, and sweet potato on 150 acres and owned circa 60 goats and 200 cows. P5 and his family had around 250 acres of land where they cultivated maize and rice, along with keeping 100 cows and 90 goats. It should be noted that a Sukuma family in Mkulazi ward usually consists of one father and the eldest son, who both have two or three wives and multiple children, so a Sukuma family unit usually consists of 15-40 individuals. This can be compared to the village farmers whose families usually consist of one husband, one wife, and a few children⁴. The main reason, along with the access to labour within the families, that pastoralists were able to cultivate such comparatively large plots of land was the cost-free access to oxen for ground preparation. The village farmers only used hoes. However, if the previous harvest had been good some village farmers said they rented oxen or even tractors to prepare the field for the next season.

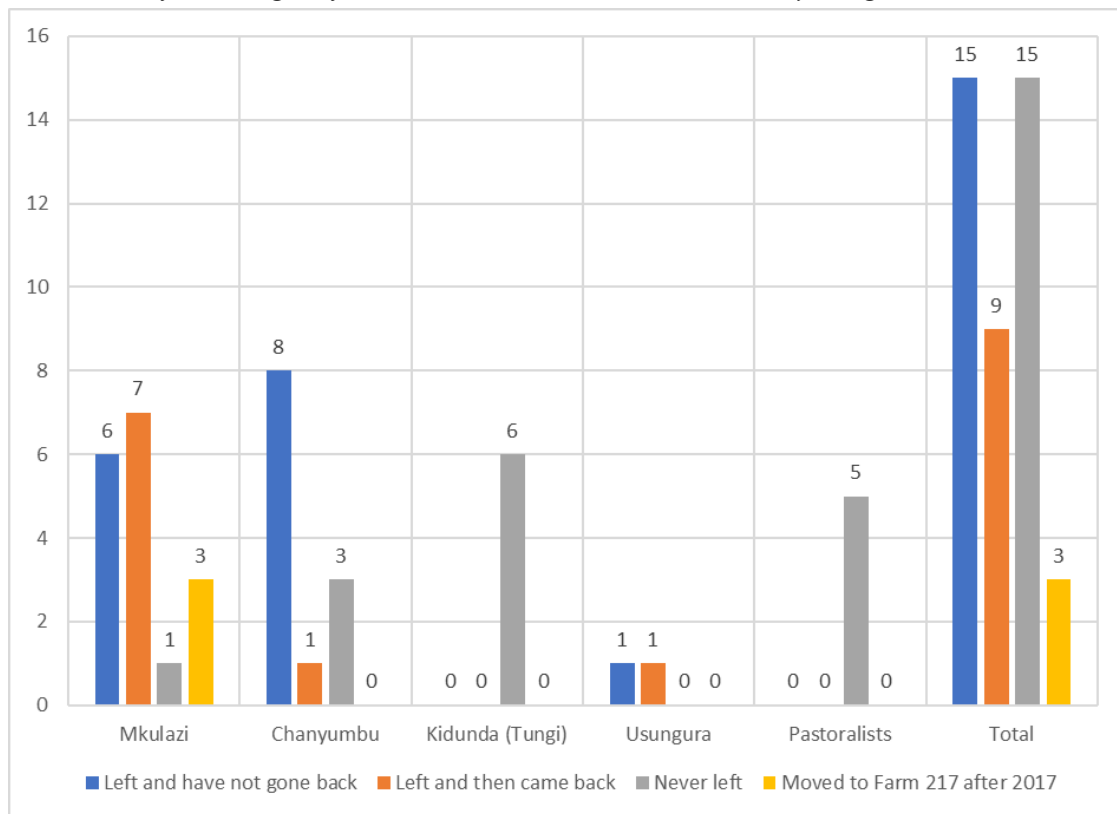
All the pastoralists that were interviewed had moved with their families to the area between 2008 and 2015, thus they lived in Farm 217 when the investors came in 2017. Despite this, neither of them said they had been affected at all by the investment plans. They did not leave their farms or search for different pastures for their cattle even though they noticed that the village farmers left their plots of land in Farm 217. P5 had even expanded his farm since 2017.

7.1.1 Four strategies

Four different strategies for how smallholders in Mkulazi ward acted when the investors came regarding their land-use within Farm 217 emerged from the interviews (see Table 1).

⁴ According to the World Bank, Tanzanian women did on average give birth to 4.7 children in 2021. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.TFRT.IN?locations=TZ>

Table 1. Identified strategies after the investors came. Total and divided by village.



Strategy 1: Those that left and did not go back

First, those that left their land in Farm 217 and have not gone back was a dominant group in the ward with 15 interviewed farmers choosing this strategy. In Mkulazi, M8, M9, and M15 all cleared new land when the investors arrived, close to a river, around an hour walk from the village in the opposite direction of Farm 217. According to them, that land belonged to the village, so they were allowed to use it. However, since it was close to the river it was very prone to floodings and did so regularly every year, thus destroying much of the planted crops. M8 and her family cultivated sorghum and maize, and they saw a dramatic decrease in crop yield compared to their previous land in the investment. Before, they got 15 sacks of maize and 20 sacks of sorghum per acre, compared to 3 and 5 respectively from their current farm by the river. M9 said: “When we were at the investment even the rats in my house were happy”, referencing the yield surplus he was able to store in his home from his previous production at Farm 217. M15 saw a similar decrease in yield and were thinking about going back to his previous land: “If the treatment with the medicine is wrong, you try something new”. M8 said she wants to return to Farm 217 but thinks that maybe it is better not to, if a new investor would come. A couple of weeks after the initial interview with M9, we went with him to his previous land in Farm 217. I was expecting that he would be maybe low spirited when seeing his old land, but instead he was cheerful, especially compared to our

first meeting at his house. He was happy to see his old land and pointed to neighbouring plots of land that his family and friends had used. To me it looked all the same, but his connection to the land was obvious. When asked how he felt to be back, he responded “*Freshii!*” with a grin on his face. *Freshii* is a Swahili slang word used by mainly young people and is a Swahilification of the word “fresh”. What he meant was that he felt happy to see his old farm and later said he wanted to “go back tomorrow”.

M10 and M11, husband and wife, cleared village land that was theirs after the investors came in 2017. The land was according to them not ideal for agriculture due to the sandy soil. This was supported by the Mkulazi VEO who said that much of the village land consists of sandy soils, while Farm 217 has mainly clay soil. Much like M8, M9, and M15, M10 and M11 also saw a dramatic decrease in yields: 15 bags of maize per acre in the investment compared to three bags per acre from the village land. Despite this, they expressed no desire to return: “I know you can go back, but the government has plans” (M10). However, one of their unmarried sons had reclaimed some of the family’s land in Farm 217. This was according to M11 a strategy within the family to spread the risks where they shared the yields from both their farms and if new investors would come back the son could use their village land instead.

In Chanyumbu, C4 and her husband had left the investment in 2017 and started using their own village land instead. They had not gone back since, despite their new land producing less because “we heard they might come back” (C4). However, C4 said she was hoping to be able to go back some day but had no concrete plans. C5, said he was planning to move back to Farm 217 next year after having left in 2017. Like the farmers in Mkulazi, C5 produced around 15 bags of maize per acre at the investment but at his new land he was only able to get five per acre. He was during the time of the interview using three different plots of land, one he got from a friend after begging for it, one was in a previous forest⁵, and the last plot he bought. Husband and wife, C6 and C7, had only used land in Farm 217 for one season when the investors came and decided to only use C7’s family’s village land instead, despite the soil in Farm 217 being better. The couple also showed an entrepreneurial spirit. Together they produced and sold *chapati*⁶-bundles filled with boiled potatoes to children and adolescents that went to the adjacent school. Also, C6 had before he moved to Chanyumbu for marriage been a mechanic in Dar es-Salaam and Morogoro. Therefore, he also had a boda-boda business and repaired others’ motorcycles as an extra source of income. When asked if they would like to return to Farm 217, they seemed rather indifferent and said they would rather

⁵ It was unclear whether it was village land or not.

⁶ A flatbread commonly found in East Africa that is cooked in oil in a pan. Similar to Indian *roti*.

develop their businesses and not have to depend on farming at all. Another married couple, C9 and C10, had left their land in Farm 217 in 2017 and now tried to survive within the village land. They had inherited both investment and village land from their fathers. In the investment area they had 20 acres, now they had to survive on three acres, which was not enough to feed their family. Because of this, the husband, C9, did manual labour to get an extra income to buy food. C10 said: “Life now is so difficult compared to those days”. They were thinking about returning to Farm 217 but were hesitant since they thought the investors might come back or there could be new ones. C9 also spoke of the trouble with moving to new farmland where they did not know its characteristics or how it reacts in different conditions. C11, a man in his 60s, had also stopped using Farm 217 in 2017, now using only one acre of village land close to his home. This was however enough for him since he was living alone but he still dreamed of going back to Farm 217. In his youth he had made such a surplus from the investment land that he did not have to worry about money and was even able to send most of his children to university. Lastly, we spoke to C12 in Chanyumbu, whose story was slightly different compared to others. He had stayed on his land in Farm 217 for about one year after the investors came but decided to leave for two reasons. First, because the farmers on the neighbouring land had left, he had found himself alone and since the farm was far away from the village he felt vulnerable to wild animals. Second, his children had just started school so they could not accompany him to the farm anymore. He was by the time of the interview using four acres of village land he had gotten from his father, but because of the low yields and maize pests he was planning to go back to Farm 217. To be able to do so he had spoken to his former neighbours in the investment to all return at the same time and help each other, most of them, he said, were positive to the idea.

U2 in Usungura had used 20 acres of land in the investment since 1992, where he produced only sesame as a cash crop. This influx of money had made it possible for him to send his children to school and build a nice brick house. However, in 2017 he was forced to leave the farm and was now farming on the village land where he is only able to produce enough for his subsistence. Due to this, his personal economy had gone bad, but he felt lucky to already have sent all his children to school before 2017. He did not express any will to go back to Farm 217 and said: “You might be forced to stop farming in the investment land any time.”.

Strategy 2: Those that left but returned

Second, there were those that first left Farm 217 and then came back. C3 used 10 acres in the investment land but left for one year when the investors came. He then moved his production to a plot of land that was part of an animal reserve, the Chair had however allowed him to use it despite it being illegal. The animal reserve land had problems with floodings, so his yields were very low compared to before, so

after one year he reclaimed his old land. He did however keep using the animal reserve land to date and now had two farms. Notably, C3 was the only one in Chanyumbu that left Farm 217 and then returned. M4 and M5, wife and husband, left Farm 217 for four years. They borrowed land from M5's aunt but decided to move back in 2021 when the investors had left. Also, the relationship between M5 and his aunt had apparently not been good enough to continue with that arrangement. M2 had a similar arrangement after 2017, where he borrowed land from his grandmother. The land was however not fertile, so he went back to Farm 217 in 2020. M18 also acquired land from a relative, his uncle, after 2017, but only managed to stay for two years due to poor yields. "It was a hard decision to move back, but I must feed my family". At his uncle's land he only managed to produce three bags of maize per acre, compared to 18 at the investment. M17 borrowed land from her brother after 2017 but also experienced a lack of yield so she went back quickly after noticing that Farm 217 was left idle. Like others in Mkulazi, M13 moved to land close to the river but only stayed for one season due to poor yields. He did however say that if the investors came back, he would leave for the river area again despite the problems he experienced. In Usungura, U1, an agro-pastoralist, had a 45-acre farm in Farm 217 but was forced to leave it for three years after the investors came. He then used five acres of village land instead, which made his family struggle a bit, but they did not go hungry. This was because they also had cattle, which they still grazed in Farm 217, that could mitigate the stress of losing their land. He had since gone back to his 45-acre farm but said: "We are using the land with lots of worries". U1 could due his dual production also be placed in the third category, those that never left, but I decided to code him as having left and then come back since it better reflect the strategy he and his family decided to follow.

Strategy 3: Those that never left

The third strategy to deal with the investment was to not leave the land at all. In Mkulazi, M3 was the only farmer that we spoke to that had stayed since 2017. As stated previously he had a profound connection to Farm 217 since he had relatives buried on that land and did not see how it could be wrong of him to stay put on the land. He did on the other hand welcome investments and put much trust in the government: "First is God, second is government". In Chanyumbu, three interviewees had stayed put on their land. C1 had lived in Dar es-Salaam during the events of 2017, but he co-owned land in the investment with his wife's parents who had not left, and now he was back and using the land together with them. According to him, the investors had said that they could keep using their land until they came back, as long as the farmers did not plant any permanent crops, which they had not done. C8 had heard the same thing as C1 and had therefore not left. He had hoped to be part of the potential outgrower groups and was hoping for the investors to

return. C2 had also used his Farm 217-land continuously without making any changes to what he cultivated.

In Tungi (Kidunda), no one that was interviewed had left their land. As stated previously, K1, the subvillage Chair had been to a seminar in Morogoro where the investors had told him they could keep using the land since the investment was out of money. K1 had even dared to expand his farm due to this knowledge, something he had shared among his peers. Neither K2, K3, K4, K5 or K6 had made any changes in their production due to the investment. Similarly, neither of the pastoralists that was interviewed said they had been affected at all by the investment. P5 had for example expanded his farm by almost 200% since 2017.

Strategy 4: Those that moved to Farm 217 after 2017

Fourth, and lastly, there were those that had moved to Farm 217 after the investors came. We only found and spoke to farmers that had done so in Mkulazi village. M6 and M7 were married and had cleared land in the investment in 2020 together with seven other farmers who all moved there at the same time. Some of them had used Farm 217 previously. M7's parents were already using land in Farm 217 so he and M6 had a prior connection to it. M7 further said that the fact they were willing to move to Farm 217 despite knowing it was intended for investment was telling for how the situation on the village land was regarding poor soils and floodings. M16 was a bit of a special case. She had moved to Mkulazi from Dar es-Salaam in 2023 and then started using the same land in Farm 217 as her mother- and brother-in-law had done. They had not told her that it was land intended for investment and seemed surprised when we told her about it. Still, she expressed no will to leave by saying: "I am a farmer, what else would I do?".

Summing up the four land-use strategies

To conclude, this section has presented the four different strategies land-users in Mkulazi ward resorted to after the investors came. While they at first glance might appear distinct and heuristic, it is important to remember the nuances that exist within them and the diverse fates of life they represent. Further, the dynamics of knowledge, societal structure, and uncertainty, which constitute an open moment, influenced how the smallholders acted and what strategy they chose regarding their land-use.

7.2 Theme 2: Risks and opportunities

Here, results from the interviews will be presented that will help me answer the second research question, which aims to understand what risks and opportunities land-users could identify in their use of Farm 217. This section is divided into two

subthemes. The first subtheme describes what opportunities the smallholders see for themselves if they were to have the ability to access Farm 217 under more certain conditions, but also what risks they associate with these opportunities and what stops them from trying to catch them. The second subtheme gives me an understanding of what hopes for future the interviewed smallholders have and what risks and opportunities they can identify within these hopes.

7.2.1 Subtheme 2.1.: If the land-users were to have a more certain access to Farm 217

For this scenario, as the section title indicates, the farmers and pastoralists were asked questions about what they would do on Farm 217 if they knew that the land could not be taken away from them.

The agro-pastoralist in Usungura, U1, said that he would not change what he produced on the land if it was formally his. Nor would he have used it differently if he was never forced away. The only effect it had had for him and his family was that it had halted his family's development during the three years they did not use the land, but they were now on the right course. The other agro-pastoralists in the ward responded similarly to what U1 said. Neither mentioned they would change anything about their use of the land. P4 did however say that if he and the other pastoralists owned the land, he would want them to co-operate in building dams scattered across Farm 217 so that their livestock could drink without needing to be herded far away to the Ruvu river. Water availability was a big problem during the dry season, mainly due to the large distance to the rivers, but also due to crocodiles that attacked both the livestock and the herders.

U2, an elder but vibrant farmer in Usungura, had big plans before 2017. Due to his previous bountiful sesame production in Farm 217, he had been able to build himself a nice house and he had plans to invest his future earnings by building similar houses, which he would then have rented out for a profit, but these plan had been abandoned. "If the investors never came my life could be changed", he said, and ended the interview by saying "Life is down" when asked how he had been affected by the investment.

In Tungi, there had been plans to develop the village. According to all interviewees in Tungi, they had been talking about building a road connecting them to Kidunda and to establish a school in the village so that their children did not have to cross the river to get to it. The current path to Kidunda from Tungi, as discussed previously, took about one and a half hour with boda boda, thus making it nearly impossible for the Tungi farmers to sell their agricultural products. If they had a better road, K4 would have liked to produce and sell tomatoes and watermelons.

K5 wanted to sell potatoes and onions. K3 already grew bananas but were not able to sell them fast enough due to the poor infrastructure, instead they rotted on his farm. The subvillage Chair, K1, said the road and school plans were abandoned when the investors came, due to the uncertainty regarding their future. Further, K4 mentioned that if he owned the land, he would take a loan from a bank with the land as collateral and invest in irrigation. Similarly, K6 also wanted to take a loan from a Village Community Banking-group (VICOBA) to invest in her farm, but according to her, she needed to be the formal owner of the land to be able to do so.

The answers were somewhat different in Mkulazi compared to Tungi. Most of the respondents mentioned, independent of each other, that they would plant permanent crops, such as cashew, mango, banana, mango, and coconut. For instance, M5 said that if he owned the land, he would expand with a few acres and plant cashew trees which would then provide him with nuts, timber, and non-timber related products. An agricultural extension officer, most likely from the district office, had visited the village a few years prior to 2024 and told the farmers about the benefits of cashew trees. M8 and M9 seemed to have gotten the same information and they had planted three cashew trees a few meters from their house but had not been able to reap the benefits because of monkeys that ate the nuts and cashew apples. Beside permanent crops, several interviewees also mentioned wanting to cultivate and sell cash crops if they owned the land, where the most prevalent crops mentioned were sunflowers and sugar cane (M10, M16, M17). Furthermore, M11 was the only farmer of all interviewees in the entire ward that said she would have built a house in Farm 217 if the land was hers.

In Chanyumbu, the answers were similar to those provided in Mkulazi, with a slight leaning towards cash crops instead of permanent crops. Several of them mentioned that the new road that had been built for a dam project in Kidunda had provided them with a better access to markets in Ngerengere, Morogoro, and Dar es-Salaam. Both C2 and C3 would for example like to cultivate sunflowers and then sell them to processing plants in the cities if they were able to use Farm 217 freely. C6, C7, C9, C10, and C12 all said they would have sold the agricultural surplus from their farms in Farm 217 and then invested the money in improving their houses. Mainly, they wanted to replace their thatch roofs with tin. C1 had, as described previously, lived in Dar es-Salaam. There, he had been selling bananas that were grown in northern Tanzania and then sold in the city. He said during the interview that he was thinking of starting growing banana on the land close to his house to sell. However, he stated that his land in Farm 217 would be better suited for banana production since it held water much better. Despite this, C1 was still reluctant to plant the trees there since he could be forced off the land any day, but if he owned the land, he felt that he could have a lucrative business. Both C5 and C8 wanted to grow rice in Farm 217 if it was theirs. C8 knew of a good, well-irrigated spot where

rice would strive, but was reluctant to start using it since his own investment in labour and time to initiate it could prove in vain if the investors came back. C5 had a similar dilemma and said “It gives me headache” regarding knowing how much potential laid in the unused land in Farm 217.

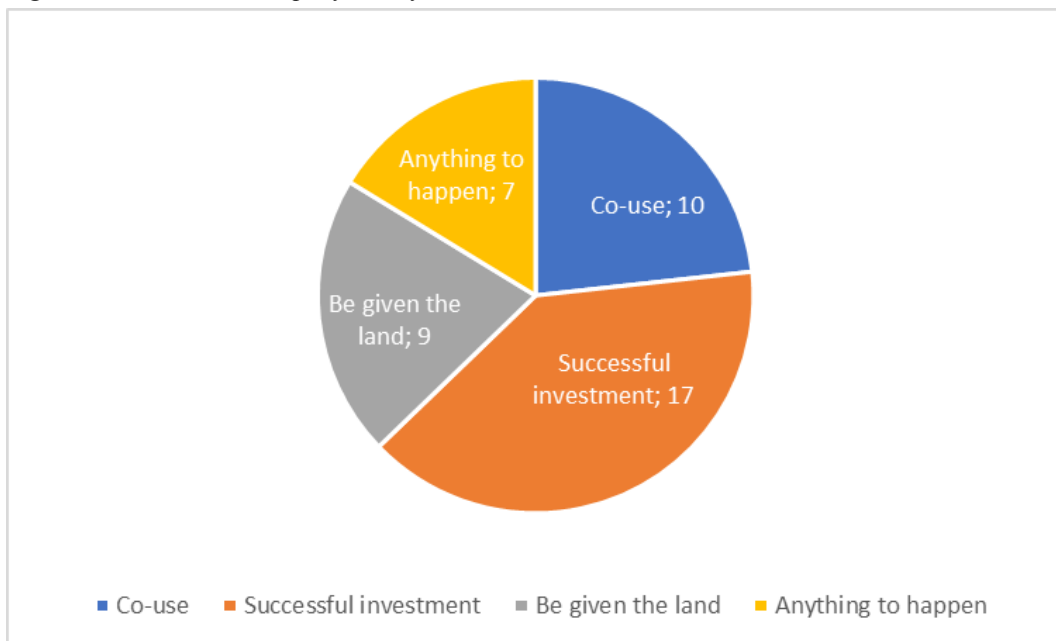
Summing up subtheme 2.1.

To conclude, this section has presented the diverse opportunities the land-users could see for themselves if they were to be able to use Farm 217 at their own will. However, the risks that stops them from trying to catch these opportunities are the same, they do not dare to try them because they do not own the land. Much like the different strategies that was undertaken when the investors came in 2017, there are just as many, if not more, strategies that the land-users would like to use to be able to develop their lives, had just the land been legally theirs.

7.2.2 Subtheme 2.2.: Opportunities for the future

Here, the answers the land-users gave to questions regarding what they wanted to happen with Farm 217 in the future and what opportunities they could see within these hopes regarding their use of Farm 217. Four hopes emerged among the smallholders (see Figure 4) which will be presented in the following text.

Figure 4. Smallholders' hopes for the future.



Those that wanted anything to happen

First, there were those that said they wanted anything to happen with Farm 217. C11 said that he would be thankful if he was given land in Farm 217, but also thankful if the investors came back or if there were new ones. He did think that

someday the government would claim the land again, comparing the current situation with Farm 217, with how the process regarding building a new road through the village had unfolded. The government had reportedly placed land beacons but then the project went silent for many years, until it had been built swiftly. “The government has its secrets”, he said, meaning that they do not want to talk too much until everything is ready to go. Similarly, M12 said “Whenever they come, I will leave”, indicating that she was thinking investors would come back at some point, but would then find other land. She was also working as a store clerk in a small shop in the village, providing her with a diversified income compared to others, so a new investment would not be as devastating for her. She did however say “I am scared because that land is not mine” meaning that the current situation was ideal. M14 could see potential benefits from both a new investment and being given the land to use freely. The current situation had however stopped him from being able to develop. M17 did, like C11 and M12, think that the government would come back one day and meant that the current situation had stopped her from developing because she had “One leg inside, one leg outside”, meaning that her life was in limbo. C1 expressed that he only thought Mkulazi ward could be developed by modern agricultural practices, especially tractors. Further, he said that this could be done by new investors but that they in that case needs to be thorough, otherwise they might do more harm than good.

Those that wanted to co-use Farm 217 with investors

Second, there were those that wanted investors to come, but thought they should share the land. As Figure 4 shows, ten land-users said they would prefer this scenario. In Tungi, five of the six interviewed farmers thought this, and mentioned several benefits to this type of arrangement. Mainly, they wanted to have a market for their agricultural products, which they thought an investment would create. K5, K4, and K3, all men in their 30s, thought an investment would also provide them with employment opportunities in the form of contract farming or factory jobs. As discussed previously, Tungi had issues with the road to and from the village, so K3, for instance, mentioned that an investment could mean developed infrastructure in the area. They did nevertheless want to keep cultivating their land in Farm 217 even if an investment was to come. K6, a woman in her 60s, said that they should use Farm 217 together, and concluded with “This is my grandparents land”, indicating a sentimental connection to her land. Further, K2 responded “I felt good, because when they come and invest, we get development”, to a question regarding what she felt back in 2017 when the investors came. M2 in Mkulazi shared the hopes expressed in Tungi and deemed co-usage as the best-case scenario for the future. According to M7, representatives from MHCL had said that it would be possible to give the farmers part of Farm 217⁷. While being happy when the investors left in

⁷ It should be noted that this information was not provided by anyone else.

2021, U1 said that he now hoped for them to come back, which he thought would provide the current land-users with access to farming machines, pesticides, and knowledge about modern farming practices.

Those that wanted a successful investment

The third category of hopes for the future among the land-users, are that of hoping for an operational investment. This hope was the most prevalent of all and mainly expressed in Mkulazi and Chanyumbu. C12 hoped that the investment would be operational because it would provide employment opportunities and income. C9 and C10 thought the same thing but said that MHCL should explain their actions if they were to return. C8 mentioned that he would like to sell sugar cane to the company via an outgrower group. That income would mean he could send his children to school. M6 had felt sad when she saw on the news that MHCL had moved their investment to Mvomero district. C5 had also seen the news and felt sad when he heard that the factory there was successful. “Now we could be very far in development” he said, regarding if the investment had been successful in Mkulazi ward instead. He now wished for investors to come and start using the land, otherwise “The situation will not be good”. Similarly, C3 and M3 saw no potential downsides to a new investment, hoping to get employment and then be able to send their respective children to school. M10 did not have anything against being given land in Farm 217 but could not see how he could be developed from it since he would still be using the same methods as before. Therefore, he only saw an investment as the way forward. M8 wanted to return to her previous land since it meant a lot to her but thought that a new investment might be better for her life in the long run. K1 expressed eagerly that investors “Should come like the wind” since he thought they would bring business opportunities and infrastructure. He mentioned that investors would not only mean employment but also opportunities to open for example shops, restaurants, wakalas⁸, and guest houses.

Those that wanted to own Farm 217

Fourth and lastly, there were nine respondents that said they would like to own the land in the future. M18, C2, and C4 seemed neutral when asked what they were hoping for the future, but all said they would rather own the land. M18 wanted to plant permanent crops, such as cashew and mango, and sell the harvest, while C4 and C2 wanted to sell maize, sorghum, and sesame. Most land-users who wanted to own the land were agro-pastoralists where all five of those interviewed preferred this scenario. Neither of them had been affected by the investment in 2017 and would therefore like to carry on as before. P3 said that even if he owned the land, he would carry on exactly as before. The only one who would do something different

⁸ A small shop where customers can buy cell phone-related services, such as surf data, call time, and transfer money.

was P4, who, as described previously, would like to build dams closer to his home to be able to water his cattle.

Summing up subtheme 2.2.

To conclude, most of the land-users that were interviewed can be placed in the category of those that just wants something to happen regarding the situation with Farm 217. Almost all could see merits with both getting an investment or being given the land, it was often after I explicitly asked which scenario they would prefer that I got an answer. The take-away of this section is that almost all saw opportunities to be involved in producing agricultural products to the market so they can earn a cash-income, either by owning the land or being part of an outgrower group. The agro-pastoralists were the only ones not expressing this desire.

8. Analysis

When starting the field work, I felt that something had happened in Mkulazi ward that had deeply affected the land-users, and still was. At first, it was difficult to pinpoint what it was that had changed. The investors came in 2017, cleared boundaries, and held a few meetings. In Usungura they had started a seed nursery, and by 2021 they were gone. There was not a fence surrounding the investment land physically stopping farmers and pastoralists from using it. There were no controls or inspections. No one that we spoke to said they or anyone else were moved by force. But somehow the land-users in Mkulazi ward were still affected in how they relate to their land in Farm 217, which in many cases led to displacement and hunger. So how and why were they affected?

As discussed in the theory section of this thesis, Stiernström (2024) writes about open moments, which I interpret as a moment in time, in a specific social and material context, where the previous societal order is challenged and cast into uncertainty. Stiernström further writes that an open moment can be a prolonged process where risks but also opportunities arise for those involved. This perspective helped me analyse the investment in 2017 and its aftermath. The analysis will be divided into the same categories as the results were presented, which correspond to my two research questions.

8.1 Analysis on changes in land-use

As Table 1 shows, a vast majority of the land-users I interviewed had been affected by the investment through direct changes in which land they used, but not *how* they used the land, i.e. what crops they planted. Of the 43 interviewees, 24 of them had left their land in Farm 217 and only nine of the 24 had returned during the time of the interviews. Those that had not gone back experienced huge decreases in yields from their new farms, mainly due to poor soils and floodings. Most of them also expressed a desire to go back to Farm 217 but were hesitant to do so because of the uncertainty regarding access to land the investment had created. They now knew that the old investors or new ones could return at any time forcing them to move again. The first move away from Farm 217 had meant months of intense work with

clearing new land and making it arable. Returning to Farm 217 would require the same work effort, which would be in vain if investors came again. This showed how the uncertainty that was caused by the open moment greatly affected the smallholders' land-use. I view the moment when investors cleared boundaries in year 2017 as the start of the open moment and I would argue that it should still be considered "open" during the time of writing (May 2024). With the investment came new knowledge to the land-users about the legal definition of Farm 217, which has changed the social land-relations in the area. Despite the land being idle from investment activities not everyone dares to return and would rather face hunger than to rely on land that could be taken away from them. I argue that it is because of the users' reshaped social relation to the land that they do not dare to return. On the other hand, there are those that returned to their land in Farm 217, which might seem contradictory to the point I am trying to make, but my interpretation of this phenomenon actually strengthens the abovementioned theory. This is because most of those that returned were not able to secure formal tenure rights to the land they left for when the investors came. Instead, they were forced to borrow land from parents, siblings, aunts, uncles, and friends. This meant that land in Farm 217 were seen as equally perilous regarding tenure rights and since the investment land gave so much more in yields it seemed like a better option. Those that had stayed put in their new farms were mainly using village land, therefore they knew they could use it however long they wanted, without being forced away by someone else, thus making a return to Farm 217 more riskful.

The smallest category in Table 1, with only three land-users represented, were those that had moved to Farm 217 after 2017. One of them (M16) had moved to Mkulazi ward in 2023 and was using the same land as her mother- and brother-in-law without knowing anything about the situation regarding investors. This makes her actions somewhat hard to analyse according to the open moment-theory. She had not moved to the area because she heard that there was fertile land laying idle, but for family reasons and simply acted as her family did. The other two in this category were husband and wife (M6 and M7) that had started using Farm 217 in 2019 or 2020 (they could not remember exactly). They had cleared land together with seven other farmers that went there together, indicating the opportunities that can arise in the open moment context. The other farmers had been using Farm 217 previously. Without the investment in 2017 that created the open moment it was unclear if M6 and M7 would have been able to start using Farm 217.

Lastly, 15 land-users responded that they had never left their land in Farm 217. Four of these were agro-pastoralists and one pastoralist. Neither reported that they had changed what they cultivated or how they conducted their livestock husbandry because of the investment. Compared to the farmers in the villages, they seemed unfaced by the events. Stiernström writes that an open moment is "[...] a turbulent

period in time when the scaffolding of a previous order is destroyed as risks and opportunities for change multiply.” (2024:35). For analysing the agro-pastoralists’ situation I think the key words here are “previous order”. While operating in roughly the same area as the village farmers, the pastoralists were not part of the exact same societal structure and had different social land-relations. They were all relatively new to Mkulazi ward but knew that the land was not theirs in a legal sense. Most village farmers that we spoke to had inherited land in Farm 217 from their families and relatives while the agro-pastoralists were first-time users. I believe this means that the agro-pastoralists’ social relation to the land were configured differently, thus they were not as affected by the investment. As noted in the paragraph above, opportunities can arise during open moments, but for the case with the agro-pastoralists it did not seem they had taken advantage of the non-operational LSLA. They had simply continued business as usual, and no one mentioned new pastoralists moving to the area after the investment was abandoned or pastoralists claiming village farmers’ old land. The agro-pastoralists that we spoke to seemed to derive great benefits from their livestock husbandry and ploughs pulled by oxen, which enabled them to clear and cultivate large farms of several hundred acres. It seemed like they were able to create beneficial livelihoods despite living in uncertainty.

Of the 15 land-users that never left their farms, another big group emerged, namely all six interviewed farmers in Tungi (Kidunda). Contrary to the pastoralists, they had lived in the area all their lives and had inherited land in Farm 217 from their relatives, like the farmers in Mkulazi and Chanyumbu. However, the Tungi-farmers differed in what strategy they chose when the investment happened since they all stayed. From the interviews, I learned that the Tungi villagers had always known that Farm 217 was intended for investment, which could be the reason they never left. Also, the subvillage Chair of Tungi, K1, had attended a meeting in Morogoro hosted by the investors where they told him that they were out of funds and that the investment was suspended. The meeting was however held in 2019, around two years after the investors came, so it does not entirely explain why they never left initially. Instead, I believe that the Tungi farmers’ prior knowledge about Farm 217 mitigated the uncertainty of the 2017 investment. Or to put it into theoretical words, the Tungi farmers had different knowledge about Farm 217 compared to those in Mkulazi and Chanyumbu, making their social land-relation different, which in turn resulted in choosing a different strategy when the open moment was created. The Tungi farmers had however been somewhat affected by the investment, not materially but mentally. Before 2017, they had plans to build a road to Kidunda and to establish a school in the village. These plans were abandoned when the investors came, indicating a case of uncertainty and awareness of risks, which is associated with open moments (see Stiernström 2024).

Besides the agro-pastoralists and Tungi-farmers, there were four other smallholders that never left their land in Farm 217. M3's social relationship to the land was very strong and he mentioned that he had relatives buried in the investment land, which he said was a reason why he never left. Again, I see that social land-relations affect how land-users dealt with the open moment created by the investment. C1, C2, and C8, all from Chanyumbu, said that the investors had told them to keep cultivating the land until they came back, and so they had done, without anyone coming back. This alludes to my previous point about how different knowledges among land-users mattered regarding what strategy they chose when the open moment started. While hard to know exactly what was said when the investors came, it is evident that the land-users' interpretations of it mattered a great deal in what strategy they chose.

8.1.1 Summary on changes in land-use

Here, I will answer the first research question.

- *How does the open moment in Mkulazi ward, caused by a non-operational LSLA, affect land-use among smallholders?*

By using open moments as an analytical tool, along with correlating terms such as societal structure, social land-relations, uncertainty, and knowledge, I have found that the different input values various actors had prior to the open moment affected how they navigated within it. It seems like the Tungi farmers' prior knowledge about Farm 217 being owned by the government made them stay even when the investment was announced, since they knew the land was not legally theirs to begin with. Therefore, especially compared to the farmers in Mkulazi and Chanyumbu that had no prior knowledge, the open moment that the investment created was less traumatic and created less uncertainty for the Tungi farmers. Furthermore, the pastoralists chose the same strategy as the Tungi farmers. They had however no prior knowledge about Farm 217 being intended for investment but knew it was not legally theirs and had all moved to it in the past 15+ years. This meant that the agro-pastoralists' were not part of the same societal structure as the village farmers regarding Farm 217, therefore they were not as affected by the open moment that the investment created. Perhaps pastoralists can thrive in uncertain conditions making them experts of open moments.

In Mkulazi and Chanyumbu, most interviewees had left their farms when the investors came, but after a while some went back. I interpret the fact that they left as a sign of them being deeply embedded in the previous societal structure, which made the start of the open moment more stressing and therefore they chose a more radical strategy, compared to the Tungi farmers and pastoralists. The latter two groups had lived in a societal structure where uncertainty about their property

relations was more prominent, which made the open moment less damaging. Furthermore, those that had stayed on their new land seemed to have had a more stable tenure relation to it, compared to those that returned. Those that stayed mainly gained access to village land which they knew they could use indefinitely, while those that returned had mainly borrowed it from family and friends. This meant that even after leaving the uncertainty in Farm 217, they found themselves in another uncertain social land-relation. After finding out that the new land produced much smaller yields, they went back after a few growing seasons since both the old and the new land meant uncertainty, but at least in Farm 217 they could produce more. Here, I found that the degree of uncertainty within a social land-relation affected how land-users acted within the open moment. A previously uncertain social land-relation proved relatively beneficial compared to a previously certain social land-relation.

8.2 Analysis on risks and opportunities identified by smallholders within the open moment

Beyond the practical land-use strategies discussed above, I also wanted to understand how the investment had influenced the land-users' hopes for their future land-use and what risks and opportunities they identified related to it. This is important to understand as it goes beyond the practical impacts of an open moment. Instead, it shows how land-users are affected mentally, which can give clues into how they decide to act in the future. Of the 43 interviewed, 17 said they wanted a successful investment and ten wanted to use Farm 217 together with investors. Only nine said they would rather be given the land to be able to use it freely and seven simply wanted the uncertainty to stop, not favouring any specific outcome.

Building on the concept of open moment I will analyse the abovementioned findings by looking at perceptions of risks and opportunities during an open moment. Clearly, most land-users saw that their opportunities within the open moment was to continue down the path that the investors had initiated. Stiernström writes that “[...] rural areas are defined as places in need of development. This notion [...] is not only assigned from the outside, but can also exist within rural communities, where the continued existence of community is understood to depend on a willingness to sacrifice in the name of development and survival.” (2024:43). I believe that this became the main perception of opportunity to develop among the land-users. Those smallholders that wanted a successful investment thought that it would mean labour opportunities at factories and outgrower schemes, along with development of infrastructure, social services, schools, hospitals, medical dispensaries etc. Those that wanted to co-use Farm 217 with investors had similar ideas as mentioned above, but mainly saw that they would be able to still cultivate

their current or former land and sell their yields to the investors. Four of the nine that wanted to own Farm 217 on their own thought that it would mean they could produce a surplus at their farms and sell it on the market. While being a slightly different vision of opportunity, the end goal is similar to those that want to co-use the investment, namely, to be part of a market-based economy. The only outlier regarding perceptions about opportunities among the land-users were the agro-pastoralists. I believe this can be explained by the fact that they had virtually no contact with the investors, thus they were not as aware about the perceived opportunities on development that the investment brought with it. Also, as shown in the first section of the analysis, they were able to derive good benefits from the land on their own.

Most smallholders in Mkulazi ward could see opportunities to develop on their own, had there not been an investment. For instance, all interviewees in Tungi said they had plans before 2017 to make a new road to Kidunda which would benefit their community greatly, especially since they would be able to sell their crops to the market. However, the risks inherent to an open moment made the Tungi-farmers reluctant to take this opportunity. In this case, the risk of the open moment lied in the farmers being afraid of new or old investors to come, which could mean that they would be forced to move. This made them reluctant to build a road as of now. The fear of investors coming back was also the main perceived risk among other smallholders in the ward. C1 for instance, had experience of selling bananas in Dar es-Salaam and were now planning on cultivating and selling banana on his village land-farm. However, he thought that the soil and conditions in Farm 217 would be better suited for a banana plantation but did not dare to plant perennial crops there due to the risk of investors coming. Similarly, C5 and C8 knew good spots to grow rice in Farm 217 but did not dare to clear the land as their efforts could prove in vain if the investors were to return. A number of respondents in both Chanyumbu and Mkulazi said they would like to plant fruit trees in Farm 217 but did not dare to do so because of their, very real, perception of risk.

8.2.1 Summary on risks and opportunities within an open moment

Here, I will answer the second research question.

- *What risks and opportunities regarding land-use do smallholders identify within the open moment in Mkulazi ward caused by the non-operational LSLA?*

My empirical findings and analysis show that there are various perceptions of opportunities within an open moment caused by a non-operational LSLA in Mkulazi ward. When asked what they hoped for their future land-use, most of the smallholders identified opportunities that related to a more or less operational

investment (see Figure 4). They wanted to be part of outgrower groups, work at factories, or sell cash crops to a company. Even those that wanted to own Farm 217 saw that being part of a market-based economy was the way forward as they wanted to sell crops grown in Farm 217. One group did stand out, the agropastoralists. They expressed no desire to be part of a market-based economy and saw neither opportunities nor risks with their future land-use.

When asked about what the land-users would do if they owned Farm 217, I was able to understand what risks they saw within the open moment. While the smallholders had diverse ideas about how they could develop by using Farm 217, they were all hesitant to do so due to the risk of the old investors coming back or new investors acquiring the land. With an open moment, as Stiernström (2024) writes, comes uncertainty. Due to this uncertainty and new knowledge about the tenure regulations about Farm 217, the smallholders uniformly saw a risk of being forced away from their land, which caused them to be stuck in a limbo of sorts, where they were not able to realise their identified opportunities of development, be it via investments or on their own.

9. Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this thesis has been to fill two knowledge gaps. First, to contribute to the existing body of literature on non-operational LSLAs and how they affect land-users. Second, to provide information on the investment initiated by MHCL, something that (to my knowledge) had only been written about once by Sulle (2020). The results correspond well with what has been written previously on non-operational LSLAs in general (Nolte 2020; Borrás et al 2022; Broegaard et al 2022; Chung and Gagné 2021; Cochrane et al 2024; GRAIN 2018; Chung 2017) and provides fresh insights from a new ‘case’. The similarity lies in the fact that the previous users were affected negatively by the non-operational LSLA. However, as all above-mentioned researchers have shown, how the previous users are negatively affected varies from case to case and even within the cases. Hopefully, these insights can influence governments, investors, politicians, and policymakers to make more informed decisions in future investment endeavours, especially by taking the existing land-users’ perspectives in mind already at the planning stage.

The Tanzanian government intend to have new investments in the area, something that will affect the current smallholders greatly. Especially as agricultural investments are prone to become non-operational. My biggest hope is that this text can influence decision-makers to give the local land-users in Mkulazi ward secure tenure rights to Farm 217 and support them in creating development, on their own conditions. Olivier De Schutter, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food from 2008 to 2014, formulated my sentiment well: “[...] what we need is not to regulate land-grabbing as if this were inevitable, but to put forward an alternative program for agricultural investment.” (De Schutter 2011:250). I firmly believe that the land-users in Mkulazi ward could create a thriving community, if investments were made in them, not in the land. The actions of the Tanzanian government, in the form MHCL, have started an open moment, which has caused local displacement, uncertainty, halted development, and hunger in Mkulazi ward, something they do not recognize or plan to compensate for.

9.1 Ideas for further research

This thesis has only dealt with a few aspects of the effects of the non-operational LSLA in Mkulazi ward. Below, I will present three different ideas for how further research in the area could be focused.

- The dynamic between village farmers and pastoralists needs to be studied further in Mkulazi ward. There were already conflicts between the two groups, mainly due to the pastoralists' cattle eating village farmers' crops. Pastoralists also spoke of being discriminated against by the village farmers. If new investments come, land will become scarcer, and further conflicts are likely to happen.
- As Chung (2017) has shown, the social relation to land can differ between men and women. Therefore, research focused on if men and women are affected differently by the non-operational LSLA is a highly needed and interesting topic to research.

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Populärvetenskaplig sammanfattning

År 2017 kom ett statligt företag som hette Mkulazi Holding Company Limited till Mkulazi ward i östra Tanzania. Representanter från företaget sa till bönderna i området att marken de brukat i flera generationer inte tillhörde dem. Istället var det enligt företaget mark som var avsatt för jordbruksinvesteringar och att företaget nu skulle inleda storskalig sockerrörsodling med tillhörande fabrik på den. Böndernas liv vändes upp och ned eftersom de var beroende av sina jordbruk. Vissa av dem lämnade sin mark medan andra stannade och väntade på att företaget skulle inleda sina planer. Men inget hände på flera år. År 2021 hade företaget istället helt avbrutit sina planer, men skadan var redan åsamkad. Vissa av bönderna vågade återgå till sin gamla mark men deras relation till den hade förändrats. De visste att företaget eller någon annan investerare kunde tvinga iväg dem en gång till vilket skapade stor osäkerhet för framtiden bland bönderna.

I denna uppsats ämnar jag genom intervjuer och observationer från en fältstudie förstå hur bönderna reagerade både praktiskt och mentalt när företaget kom och sedan lämnade. Min teoretiska utgångspunkt är att den avbrutna investeringen har skapat en så kallad 'öppning' (open moment), vilket innebär att de tidigare samhällsstrukturer som bönderna förlitade sig på har kullkastats. Detta leder i sin tur till osäkerhet (uncertainty). Dessutom skapas nya möjligheter och risker av en 'öppning'. Jag upptäckte att bönderna agerade på olika sätt i 'öppningen' som företaget orsakade och att det berodde på vilken typ av kunskap och relation de hade till marken innan 2017. För de bönder som trodde att de ägde marken de brukat blev 'öppningen' mer traumatisk då de i hög grad lämnade den helt jämfört med de som visste att marken tillhörde den tanzaniska staten. Denna grupp valde att stanna och vänta för att se om företaget faktiskt skulle sätta igång med sina planer. Min slutsats är att de bönder som valde att inte lämna sin mark redan brukade den med en viss grad av osäkerhet, därför blev 'öppningen' inte lika omvälvande som för de som trodde att de ägde marken. Samtidigt såg alla bönder jag intervjuade att deras jordbrukande var riskfullt eftersom deras mark kunde tas ifrån dem när som helst. Detta gjorde att de inte kunde utvecklas genom sitt eget jordbrukande. Istället ville en majoritet av bönderna att det skulle komma investerare igen, vilket de trodde skulle innebära att deras liv utvecklades genom arbetstillfällen och lönerarbete.

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Lastly, thank you Lina for supporting me through this thesis and my entire education. Thank you for making my dreams come true. I love you.

Appendix 1

Call for investment for Farm 217 from TIC. Screenshot taken by author from TIC's website.



CALL FOR INVESTMENT CONCEPT NOTES FROM POTENTIAL INVESTORS FOR DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATION OF MKULAZI FARMS AGRICULTURAL INVESTMENT CITY, AT MKULAZI AREA, NGERENGERE, MOROGORO REGION, TANZANIA

<p>1. Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC) is a One Stop Agency set up under the Tanzania Investment Act No. 10 of 2022 to promote, coordinate and facilitate investment in Tanzania. Through the TIC the Government of the United Republic of Tanzania has allocated 60,103 hectares of land for the development of an agricultural City (investment in large-scale commercial farming for cultivation of crops and modern livestock keeping).</p> <p>2. The site is situated alongside the TAZARA railway line linking Dar es Salaam with the Zambian border, approximately 100 km from Dar es Salaam. Mkulazi is well-positioned to serve the growing local, regional, and global demand-supply gap in both the sugar and rice markets and products of livestock as well as other agricultural commodities with the potential to reduce imports of key products and boost the export capabilities of Tanzania.</p> <p>3. The farm will be subdivided and subtitled into 10,000 Hectares farms. While four farms are intended for the cultivation of a variety of crops depending on the land suitability, one farm is designated for establishing a modern and high-technology livestock-keeping and processing facility centre. The soil in Mkulazi is suitable for cultivating a variety of crops including sugar cane, rice, maize, sorghum, etc. The allocation of the Mkulazi farm measuring 60,103 Hectares will be guided by the Tanzania Investment Centre land allocation Manual. The remaining 10,103 will be allocated in future dates towards the development of agro-processing zones, and agriculture value addition industries.</p> <p>4. As stated in the Tanzania Investment Policy, 1996 potential investors are assured priority access to land set aside by the government for investment. The Mkulazi land parcel is part of the Land Bank under the title deed of the land secured by TIC from the Ministry of Land and Human Settlements and the whole land is under the TIC land bank.</p> <p>5. Therefore, TIC is now inviting both local and foreign investors to apply for allocation by submitting Investment Concept Notes to develop and operate sections the agricultural city or establish end-to-end livestock-keeping and process facility centre.</p> <p>6. The preliminary evaluation criteria for the investment Concept Notes are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Certified copies of legal entity documentsii. Quality of the Investment Concept Note (Project Title. The project	<p>title should be clear and concise. Project Objective, Background and Context, Target Audience and Beneficiaries, Project Activities, and Methodology, Expected Outcomes and Impact, Monitoring, Budget and Resources, and Project implementation schedule).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">iii. Quantity of current land area under cultivation;iv. Quantity of agricultural commodity cultivated;v. Quantity of agricultural commodity processed/produced;vi. Linkages with the market to sell value-added agricultural commodities and quantity of processed commodities soldvii. Approved project will have to be commenced within 24 months by signing a performance contract and submitting a Bank Guarantee the sum will be agreed upon between TIC and the prospective Investorviii. Alignment to the Tanzania Development Vision 2025 and National Five-Year Development Plan.ix. Value for money in terms of benefits to the Government of Tanzania including, Economic development stimulation, increase of exports /import substitution, Employment and economic boost, Development of resources and Resource transfer, Increased production, and Increase in a country's income:x. Evidence of the financial capacity of investors by submitting five years of audited financial reportsxi. Investor track record or experience in undertaking similar projects.xii. Plan to involve out-growers scheme with examples from good experience, (where applicable)xiii. Capacity to develop an agricultural city with important agricultural infrastructures and facilities, to serve as model farmsxiv. Proposed annual rental fee to be paid to TIC <p>7. Upon completion of the evaluation of the submitted Investment Concept Notes, TIC will shortlist prospective investors that will meet evaluation criteria and thereafter invite successful applicants to submit full Request for Proposals (RFP) based on TIC-approved Terms of Reference for the call for proposals within TIC land bank allocation procedures and guidelines.</p> <p>8. The window for Investment Concept Note submission will be open starting 10th December 2023 and will be closed on Monday 12th February 2024 at 1400 hours EAT. The hard copy of the proposal should be submitted and addressed to:</p>
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The Executive Director,
Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC)
Head Office, P.O. Box 938
Golden Jubilee Tower, 1st Floor, Ohio Street,
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

Further enquiries should be communicated by **E-mail at info@tic.go.tz or Phone numbers +255 734 989 470 and +255 737 879 087.**

Please, note that late submissions will not be accepted. The proposal must be marked:
Investment Concept Note for Agriculture City at Mkulazi Area, Ngerengere, Morogoro, Tanzania

Appendix 2

Interviews in Mkulazi village.

Mkulazi		
Identification code:	Age:	Gender:
M1	60	Female
M2	35	Male
M3	70	Male
M4	30	Female
M5	35	Male
M6	30	Female
M7	35	Male
M8	30	Female
M9	35	Male
M10	65	Male
M11	45	Female
M12	30	Female
M13	35	Male
M14	35	Male
M15	50	Male
M16	30	Female
M17	60	Female
M18	35	Male
Total: 18 interviews (8 female, 10 male)		

Appendix 3

Interviews in Chanyumbu.

Chanyumbu		
Identification code:	Age:	Gender:
C1	50	Male
C2	35	Male
C3	40	Male
C4	60	Female
C5	40	Male
C6	35	Male
C7	35	Female
C8	40	Male
C9	50	Male
C10	50	Female
C11	65	Male
C12	35	Male
Total: 12 interviews (3 female, 9 male)		

Appendix 4

Interviews in Tungi subvillage, part of Kidunda village.

Kidunda (Tungi)			
Identification code:	Age:		Gender:
K1	35		Male
K2	50		Female
K3	35		Male
K4	30		Male
K5	35		Male
K6	60		Female
Total: 6 interviews (2 female, 4 male)			

Appendix 5

Interviews in Usungura.

Usungura		
Identification code:	Age:	Gender:
U1	40	Male
U2	80	Male
Total: 2 interviews (2 male)		

Appendix 6

Interviews with agro-pastoralists.

Pastoralists in Farm 217		
Identification code:	Age:	Gender:
P1	40	Male
P2	40	Female
P3	40	Male
P4	35	Male
P5	45	Male
Total: 5 interviews (1 female, 4 male)		

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